

SUPERSTITIONS

1940

Albany, Ga., Herald
July 18, 1940

This Is My Personal Column

By H. T. M.

SUPERSTITIONS The old-time DIE HARD Southern Negro

had a superstition for every situation. Everything that happened had a meaning, a significance, a portent. It was the worst of bad luck to open an umbrella indoors, or to have three lamps burning in the same room. To walk under a ladder was flying in the face of providence.

One of the pet superstitions of an old colored mammy who died a number of years ago (she spent her childhood in slavery) was that if rain fell while the sun was shining it meant that the Devil was whipping his wife. It was quite impossible to change that conviction.

"An' you kin hear de licks if you stick a brass pin in de groun', den put yo' lef' ear down close to de pin an' lissen," she would say. It was interesting to make the experiment, as children in the neighborhood sometimes did. If they failed to hear the prince of darkness beating his wife, the old ex-slave insisted that "yo' ears need cleanin' out," or some other no less plausible explanation was advanced. Never would she admit that the phenomenon of rain falling through bright sunshine was less than proof positive that the Devil was using a whip on his wife.

NEVER!

superstitions were brought from Africa to this country by slaves, and were handed down from generation to generation. White children heard them and were impressed by them, confessing them by various practices designed to ward off penalties.

Building materials were piled on an Albany sidewalk, and a long ladder reached from the pavement to the top of a second-story window. There was nothing on the sidewalk close to the wall of the building, but walking there involved passing under the ladder.

A man came along, walking fast. He beheld the ladder and the unobstructed way beneath it, stopped, and surveyed the situation for a quarter of a minute. Then superstition won. He climbed out over a pile of rubbish which included lumber, brick and plaster, made his way past the ladder, then picked his way back to the cleared aisle close to the building. He had fooled the evil spirits, and went on his way rejoicing.

It is extremely difficult to argue superstition out of one who has fallen under its influence, even though he may be perfectly willing to admit that superstition is foolishness.

The chances are he will go right on picking up pins, and refusing to walk under ladders.

superstitions
Clarkesville, Tenn. Leaf Chronicle
December 12, 1940

Colored Workmen Suspend Work— Tombstone Found

Excavation work for a new furnace under the home of Dr. W. E. Pannell, on Main street, stopped just as the sun went down Wednesday and was not resumed this morning until well after sun rise. There was a definite reason.

While Wilmouth Parchman, colored plumber, was at work Wednesday afternoon he saw a white object sticking from the ground. He and a helper gingerly removed it. It was a tombstone. "That's one of them things," moaned Parchman, as he dashed from the basement.

He and his companion managed to resume work, but despite the fact they were supposed to finish the job last night, when the sun went down up came the workers. It was not until the sun was well up today before down they went to finish the work.

The tombstone bore the name of "Ellie Crusman, born May 22, 1841 and died July 19, 1852; youngest daughter of C. and M. E. Crusman."

Johnnie Haynes, Negro workman volunteered some information on the discovery. Years ago, he said, all of the block between Ninth and Eleventh and Main and Franklin Streets was a cemetery. It wouldn't be surprising if there is a wholesale moving of colored residents of that block.

**"Ole Man Mose"
Chicago Free
Press Weather
Chicago, Ill.
Is Against Him
DEC 15 1940**

CHATTAHOOGA, Tenn., Dec. 12—(AP)—The world will have to wait a bit longer if it wants to be saved, for "Old Man Mose" Walton, who was scheduled to take off Wednesday in his flying chariot built to "run on faith" found rainy weather not exactly what he wanted for miracle working.

A crowd of 1,000 Negroes and whites had assembled at the "air field"—a vacant city lot—to witness the heavenly hop. But when Old Man Mose kicked at bucking the elements on a day like that, some of the spectators thought up the idea of kicking Mose. But he

ducked it, for when they rushed him he darted into his home nearby and barricaded himself, leaving his flying machine unprotected.

His chariot, which resembles a junk pile, has somewhat the form of a plane with tin discs for propellers, pieces of wheelbarrow, old tires, wires and anything else available.

In addition to saving the world, he believes he will also be able to save Chattanooga, Atlanta and Macon from ever being destroyed by storm. Since the weather was not to his liking, he'll wait until a later date before he attempts another celestial voyage.

Knoxville, Tenn. Journal
December 27, 1940

Eat Black-Eyed Peas To Gain Luck For Year

"Dose black-eyed peas is lucky When e't on New Year's Day You allus has sweet 'taters An' 'possum come yore way."

Yes, it's an old Southern custom, and it arose in America among the Negroes—the serving of black-eyed peas on New Year's Day. But the Negroes consider the peas as only half of the good luck charm. Hog jowl must accompany them.

Miss Arralee Bunn, reference librarian at Lawson-McGhee Library, found mention of the custom in a book, "Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negroes."

The custom seems to have had its origin somewhere in European beliefs, but the Southern Negro adopted it years ago.

The belief is that serving black-eyed peas and hog jowl will guarantee plenty to eat throughout the new year. Others say you will have as many dollars during the new years as you eat peas on New Year's Day.

The custom seems to be peculiar to the South.